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News

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Airlines Post Fewer On-Time Flights in February

The nation's largest airlines recorded a lower rate of on-time flights this past February than in either January 2006 or February 2005, according to the Air Travel Consumer Report released today by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

According to information filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), a part of DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA), the 19 carriers reporting on-time performance recorded an overall on-time arrival rate of 75.3 percent in February, lower than both February 2005's 77.6 percent and January 2006's 78.8 percent.

The monthly report also includes data on flight cancellations and causes of flight delays, as well as information on reports of mishandled baggage filed with the carriers, and consumer service, disability and discrimination complaints received by DOT's Aviation Consumer Protection Division. The report also includes reports required to be filed by U.S. carriers of incidents involving pets traveling by air.

Cancellations

The consumer report includes BTS data on the number of domestic flights canceled by the reporting carriers. In February, the carriers canceled 2.1 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, a higher rate of cancellations than the 1.7 percent rate recorded in both February 2005 and January 2006.

Causes of Flight Delays

The carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 8.32 percent of their February flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 7.00 percent in January 2006; 6.92 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 5.61 percent in January; 6.08 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 5.81 percent in January; 0.92 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.87 in January; and 0.09 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.04 percent in January. Weather is a factor in both the extreme-weather category and the aviation-system category. This includes delays due to the re-routing of flights by DOT's Federal Aviation Administration in consultation with the carriers involved. Weather is also a factor in delays attributed to late-arriving aircraft, although airlines do not report specific causes in that category.

Data collected by BTS also show the percentage of overall flights delayed by weather, including those reported in either the category of extreme weather or included in National Aviation System delays. In February, 4.79 percent of flights were delayed by weather, down 9.28 percent from February 2005, when 5.28 percent of flights were delayed by weather, and up 1.91 percent from January when 4.70 percent of flights were delayed by weather.

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Detailed information on flight delays and their causes is available on the BTS site on the World Wide Web at <http://www.bts.gov>.

Mishandled Baggage

The U.S. carriers reporting flight delay and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 6.08 reports per 1,000 passengers in February, fewer than both February 2005's 6.16 rate and January 2006's 6.92 mark.

Incidents Involving Pets

In February, carriers reported only one incident involving pets while traveling by air, down from the total of two reported in January. The February incident involved a pet becoming lost. Carriers first began reporting pet incidents in May 2005.

Complaints About Airline Service

In February, the Department received 549 complaints from consumers about airline service, down 6.5 percent from the 587 complaints received in February 2005 and 33.5 percent fewer than the 826 filed in January 2006.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in February against specific airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 25 disability-related complaints in February, just over half the total of 49 complaints received in February 2005 and 40.5 percent fewer than the 42 complaints filed in January 2006.

Complaints About Discrimination

In February, the Department received five complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – fewer than the total of 10 complaints received in both February 2005 and January 2006.

Consumers may file their complaints in writing with the Aviation Consumer Protection Division, U.S. Department of Transportation, C-75, Room 4107, 400 7th St. SW, Washington, DC 20590; by e-mail at airconsumer@dot.gov; by voice mail at (202) 366-2220 or by TTY at (202) 366-0511.

Consumers who want on-time performance data for specific flights should call their airline ticket offices or their travel agents. This information is available on the computerized reservation systems used by these agents.

The Air Travel Consumer Report can be found on DOT's World Wide Web site at <http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov>. It is available in "pdf" and Microsoft Word format.

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Facts

AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT

February 2006

KEY ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLIGHT CANCELLATION STATISTICS

Based on Data Filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics by the 19 Reporting Carriers

Overall

75.3 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 94.3 percent
2. Comair – 80.3 percent
3. US Airways – 79.2 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. JetBlue Airways – 62.1 percent
2. ATA Airlines – 65.5 percent
3. Continental Airlines – 71.0 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. SkyWest Airlines flight 6238 from San Francisco to Reno, NV – late 92.86 percent of the time
2. Delta Air Lines flight 1749 from Miami to Salt Lake City – late 91.67 percent of the time
3. Atlantic Southeast Airlines flight 4788 from New York JFK to Atlanta – late 87.50 percent of the time
3. Continental Airlines flight 334 from Raleigh/Durham, NC to Newark, NJ – late 87.50 percent of the time
5. SkyWest Airlines flight 6952 from Chicago O'Hare to Detroit – late 85.71 percent of the time

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. American Eagle Airlines – 3.5 percent
2. ExpressJet Airlines – 3.0 percent
3. JetBlue Airways – 2.9 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.2 percent
2. Frontier Airlines – 0.4 percent
3. Southwest Airlines – 1.2 percent

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